

Trees

This week's recipes

James Wong turns his attention to natural tree remedies this week.

Find out how to use ginkgo leaf to make a tea which could help improve memory function and how to make a lotion to tackle headlice using Neem and tea tree oil.

James also demonstrates how a soothing gel for varicose veins can be made from conkers, and how to make a natural deodorant from pine resin.

These recipes are taken from the book 'Grow Your Own Drugs', published by HarperCollins.

Ginkgo tea for memory

2 tsp dried/5 fresh ginkgo leaves per cup drinking cup freshly boiled water

Add the ginkgo leaves to the cup of freshly boiled water and steep for 10 minutes. Strain, and drink immediately.

USE: Drink this tea once or twice a day.

Ginkgo disclaimer: Ginkgo is not recommended if you're on any other medication, you are pregnant or breast feeding.

Neem lotion for headlice

Makes enough for 5-10 doses

20 tbsp (approx. 100 g) fresh rosemary leaves 100 ml (approx. 25 g) fresh lavender flowers 100 ml neem oil
100 ml almond oil 10 garlic cloves, minced 100 ml tea tree oil

1. Strip the rosemary leaves and lavender flowers from their sprigs.
2. Combine the neem and almond oil together in a measuring jug.
3. Crush half the rosemary and lavender in a mortar and pestle with a little of the oil, to help ease the crushing process. Place the mashed-up herbs in a saucepan. Repeat with the second half of the rosemary and lavender, again adding a little oil for crushing.
4. Place the crushed herbs, neem and almond oil in the pan, and add the chopped garlic. Heat gently for about 20 minutes.
5. Strain through a sieve lined with muslin. Add the tea tree oil to the reserved oil, stir, then filter into a sterilized 500 ml bottle.

USE: If using immediately, apply to dry hair, making sure that the hair is completely covered and that the oil penetrates to the scalp. Cover with a towel and leave on for at least 1 hour, or overnight if possible. Then wash off with two applications of shampoo. Apply conditioner, and comb through with a nit comb. Use the next application 7 days later, to deal with any nits that may hatch during that

time. Comb through with the nit comb every 3 days.

STORAGE: Keeps for 6 months.

Horse Chestnut tincture

20 conkers ml vodka

1. Blend the conkers and vodka in a liquidizer until smooth.
2. Place in a sterilized bottle and keep in a cool dark place for 10 days to 1 month, shaking every day or so. Strain before using.

STORAGE: Keeps for up to 1 year.

NB This tincture is only to be used to make the Horse Chestnut Gel (see below), and must not be taken internally.

Horse Chestnut gel for varicose veins

3 sachets vegetable gelatine ml water ml Horse Chestnut Tincture drops lavender oil

1. Add the vegetable gelatine to 150 ml cold water in a pan and whisk until dissolved. Heat for about 2 minutes, whisking constantly. As the mix starts to thicken, slowly pour in the Horse Chestnut Tincture a little at a time. Add the lavender oil.
2. Pour into a 250 ml sterilized bottle.

USE: Try a 24-hour patch test before using (horse chestnut can irritate). Apply to affected areas twice daily, or as often as required.

STORAGE The gel keeps for 3 months in the refrigerator.

Pine deodorant

1/2 tsp pine resin ml vodka (or just enough to cover the ingredients) rind of 2 lemons, finely chopped rind of 2 oranges, finely chopped fresh bay leaves, finely chopped tbsp fresh pine needles, finely chopped tbsp fresh thyme leaves tbsp glycerine ml orange blossom water

1. Crush the pine resin in a pestle and mortar until you have a very fine powder. Pour over 1 tbsp of vodka and stir to dissolve. The mixture should form a thin paste. Add the chopped lemon and orange rind to the mortar and stir with a spoon to remove the last traces of sticky resin from the sides.
2. Place the resin mixture along with the bay leaves, pine needles and thyme in a Kilner jar. Add enough vodka to cover, then seal and leave in a dark place for 2 weeks to 1 month.
3. When ready, strain off the herbs through a muslin-lined sieve into a jug, and stir in the glycerine and orange blossom water. Pour into a 100 ml glass spray bottle.

USE: Do a 24-hour test on a small patch of skin before using. Shake well and apply every morning to

underarms, feet, etc.

STORAGE: Keeps for up to 1 year in a cool,dry place.